

## Scheduling During a Campaign Year

### *Governor's Office Operations*

Governors face a constant stream of competing demands for their attention and must work hard to balance the priorities of running state government, reaching out to constituents, as well as addressing family and personal needs. If the governor decides to run for re-election, the duties of campaigning during an election year can add unique challenges and opportunities to this mix. In particular, the governor must maintain focus on achieving the goals of the administration's current agenda while also finding time to promote his or her vision for the future. Without question, time is the governor's most valuable resource during a campaign year, and any other year for that matter, and effective scheduling will greatly determine how well the governor is able to balance the dual roles of chief executive and candidate.

It is important for key members of the governor's staff to take into account the challenges posed during a campaign year and actively plan ahead to develop an appropriate scheduling strategy. In particular, the governor's office must establish rules for how it will and will not interact with the campaign. Circumstances and political sensitivities may vary by state, but it is generally expected that government work be kept separate from political activities.

There are many scheduling issues that should be carefully considered during a campaign year. Two major points of primary importance are listed below:

- **It is important for key members of the governor's staff to be engaged and actively "buy in" to the scheduling process.**
- **The governor's scheduler is an important ally and should therefore be kept aware of key goals, priorities, and new developments of concern to the administration.**

The governor's schedule sets the foundation for the rest of the office. The schedule determines which initiatives and projects will receive the governor's regular attention and time, and thus greatly impacts what the administration will be able to accomplish. It is especially important during a campaign year to show state residents that the governor's focus is on governing even though he or she is running for reelection.

The governor's office can develop an effective scheduling strategy for the campaign year by addressing four key issues:

1. Communicating the governor's schedule (Will the governor's office and the campaign maintain one schedule or two?)
2. Deciding what is political and what is government business
3. Allocating time between government business and campaign duties for the governor's master schedule
4. Processing requests (Separating political and official requests)

## Develop a Scheduling Plan

A clearly defined scheduling strategy for the campaign year can help the governor's office actively plan to best utilize the governor's time and avoid conflicts of interest in the governor's activities or in the day to day work of the scheduling office. This section lists questions to consider when developing a scheduling policy and describes how these challenges have been handled by governor's offices in recent election years. This information was provided by governors' schedulers participating in the 2005 NGA Management Seminar for Governors' Schedulers held September 17-19, 2005.

### **During the campaign year, will you maintain one schedule for the governor or use separate schedules (one for state duties and one for campaign activities)?**

Many states resolve that since there is only one governor and given the comprehensive nature of his or her duties and responsibilities to the state, maintaining one schedule is best for practical purposes. No matter if there are one or two schedules, the challenge will be to have accurate and identical scheduling information for both the governor's office and the campaign office. The governor's office will need to know the governor's scheduled campaign events and the campaign will need to plan around the governor's official commitments and state duties.

### **How can you keep the governor's office and the campaign office as separate as possible while still ensuring that scheduling needs are well coordinated?**

States have used a variety of techniques to address this challenge such as holding scheduling meetings off-site from the governor's office if campaign discussions are involved, or another option is to hold meetings or conference calls with pertinent staff during non-business hours.

One state handled this by having the scheduler fax any political event requests received in the governor's office directly to the political director. The only political emails that the scheduler would accept were those that were logistical in nature and solely meant for inclusion in the governor's schedule. In another state, the scheduler took time off on a weekly basis to go to the campaign headquarters and get needed information and details for inclusion in the governor's master schedule. A third state simplified the process even further by having the scheduler give the campaign set blocks of time in the governor's schedule.

### **Do you list political and campaign events on the governor's official schedule, and if so, how do you label these events?**

Do you mark these engagements as a "private event" or include specific details? Many states make it a standard practice to limit the governor's official public schedule to official events and duties only; therefore, any meeting or event that is personal or political in nature would not be included unless there is a significant public interest or press interest in the particular activity in question.

### **Does your state have a specific policy on the use of state equipment for political activities?**

Many states do not allow the use of state equipment for political purposes and therefore the governor and his or her staff cannot receive campaign emails using state government email addresses, state-provided personal digital assistants (PDAs), or other state equipment such as cell phones. Therefore, many states pay for devices such as a Blackberry or Palm Pilot through the campaign and not with state funds if they will be used for the governor's schedule.

## Strategies for Strategic Scheduling

Besides deciding on logistical procedures to best handle the governor's schedule, another issue of particular importance is how to make decisions about event requests and actively manage the governor's schedule.

### **How can you schedule strategically to make the best use of the governor's time?**

The governor's scheduler can be the most effective ally to determine event opportunities to maximize the governor's time given the scheduler's knowledge of community groups and civic events and the sheer volume of requests and invitations that regularly come into the scheduling office.

During an election year, it is very important for the scheduler to know what groups and constituencies need or do not need to receive outreach, as well as event themes and geographic locations around the state that are of high priority to the governor's official agenda.

Some key methods for strategic scheduling include:

- Look for ways to streamline or more effectively manage the governor's participation at events to maximize time.
- Be clear with others in the governor's office on priority issues and initiatives.
- Pay attention to target particular regions and constituencies needed to garner support for the governors' priorities.

More information on scheduling strategies is available in the 2002 NGA management note, *Thinking Strategically: Managing the Governor's Schedule*. According to the management note, strategic scheduling has two primary objectives: to put the governor in the right place at the right time in order to communicate and build support for his or her vision and agenda, and to minimize the likelihood that the governor's time will be wasted on events that fail to adequately promote his or her agenda.

## Evaluating the Governor's Schedule

Once the scheduling process for the campaign year has been established, the system should be routinely checked and examined for effectiveness. Evaluating the governor's schedule is a process which should involve both the governor and key staff members. The governor's staff must be engaged and actively "buy in" to the scheduling process. In addition, it is important to ensure the governor's management style and preferences are always taken into account in the schedule. During a campaign year, the governor must work hard to balance the priorities of running state government, reaching out to constituents, as well as addressing family and personal needs. For this reason the governor's schedule must be realistic and flexible enough to respond to last-minute changes and urgent priorities.

***The following questions can help the governor and his or her staff evaluate the governor's schedule and the scheduling system:***

- Will the governor feel he or she has furthered the administration's agenda as a result of today's activities?
- How much of the governor's time is spent on priority issues?
- Is there a proper balance among meetings, phone calls, media, office time, and social events?
- Do meetings begin and end on time?

In addition to a snapshot examination, the scheduling system must be evaluated periodically in a systematic way to ensure it meets the governor's overall scheduling goals. Several broad questions about scheduling results should be asked in this review.

- How much of the governor's time is spent on priority issues?
- Do meetings generally flow properly and is the governor adequately briefed prior to each meeting?
- Are there frequent problems with the schedule, such as double bookings, events that require too much travel time, or conflicts with the plans of the governor's spouse?
- Is there movement toward the governor's overall program and policy priorities?
- Is the governor maintaining a good balance between time spent traveling, performing ceremonial functions, and conducting meetings and time reserved for personal matters?
- Is the governor achieving a balance in his or her appearances in the state's geographical areas?
- Is the schedule being used as a strategic tool to promote the governor's broader objectives?
- Are appearances, speeches, and interviews planned or does the staff simply react to individual invitations?
- Does the governor fulfill obligations that complement his or her policy strategies?
- Are the demands on the governor's time excessive?
- Does the schedule impose limitations on what the governor can accomplish in any given day?
- Is there a better way to use "down time," such as travel time to and from events?

## Conclusion

Given the unique needs and ever-changing demands on the governor's time during an election year, it is important for the governor's staff to ensure that the governor's agenda remains the primary focus and that he or she is able to use limited time productively to have the broadest possible impact on the state. Developing an effective scheduling plan, implementing techniques for strategic scheduling, and periodically evaluating the governor's schedule and the scheduling system are important steps to keep the governor's agenda on target. These efforts will make sure the governor can maximize opportunities and respond to the challenges of an election year.

## ***Additional Information***

NGA Consulting provides governors and their staff with valuable resources and management information pertaining to the life-cycles of an administration. For management strategies on governing while running for re-election, please contact **Nikki Guilford**, Director of NGA Consulting (202-624-5422; [nguilford@nga.org](mailto:nguilford@nga.org)). For more detailed research on state strategies and ideas described in this brief, please contact **Christie Amberman**, Associate Director, NGA Consulting (202-624-5370; [camberman@nga.org](mailto:camberman@nga.org)).